(c) The maximum delay in this year so far has been 493 hours in Delhi due to multiple faults in the underground cables in which only 9 telephones were involved, and 982 hrs. in Bombay due to continuous rains and scattered area and multiple faults in the cable.

(d) The under-ground cables are prone to damage in large metropolies due to increased activities for civic works. These faults are caused during the fair season when considerable amount of road surface digging takes place. But, the faults become obvious only in the rainy seasons. In addition to above another major cause for extensive damage to telephone system in Bombay during the last two years has been flooding of many areas due to failure of drainage system. Water level in many areas went upto 4-5 feet resulting in partial sub-merging of telephone equipments.

(e) The steps taken by the Government to avoid break-down of telephones during the monsoon season are as under:—

(1) Laying of main cables in ducts to protect them from external damage.

(2) Pressurisation of main cables to minimise the cable break-down faults.

(3) Use of jelly filled cables in the distribution network to prevent entry of water in the cables.

(4) Cable trenches are being flooded before being closed so as to detect any damage during the trenching or laying of cables.

(5) Extensive patrolling of cable routes to detect any digging operation and take precautionary measures to avoid damage to the cables.

(6) Covering the cables with half ducts where cable cannot be burried to the prescribed depth.

Wells drilled by ONGC

1777. SHRIMATI SUDHA VIJAY JOSHI: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM be pleased to state:

(a) how many exploratory wells were drilled by the Oil and Natural Gas Commission during each year, 1982-83 to 1984-85;

(b) whether the progress made by ONGC is adequate; and

(c) if not, what steps have been taken by Government to readjust the priorities for ONGC for exploration and production?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM (SHRI NAWAL KISHORE SHARMA):

Year	Number of exploratory Wells drilled
1982-83	73
1983-84	72
1984-85	79

(a), (b) and (c) There was some shortfall in drilling. Some of the steps being taken to improve drilling performance are:—

(i) Modernization of equipment

(ii) Provision of adequate technical and administrative back up

(iii) Training of drilling and maintenance personnel.

Offer by France for modernisation of Telecommunication

1778. SHRI RAMCHANDRA BHARADWAJ: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that France has offered to assist in the improvement and modernisation of the telecommunication network in Bombay, Delhi, Calcutta and Madras;

(b) if so, what are the salient features of the said proposal; and

(c) what is Government's reaction in regard thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Does not arise.

Relief to telephone users

1779. SHRI J. P. GOYAL: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether a decision has since been taken by Government to give relief to telephone users with respect to the period when their telephone continued to remain dead; and

(b) if so, what are the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA): (a) Yes, Sir. It has been decided in principle to grant relief in cases where the telephone service remains interrupted for 30 days or more at a stretch.

(b) Details are being worked out.

Disconnected telephones

1780. SHRI J. P. GOYAL: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) what was the number of telephone connections disconnected in the country during the last three years, year-wise for not making payment of telephone dues;

(b) what was the amount of telephone dues outstanding for the last three years, year-wise; and

(c) what steps have been taken by Government to realise the outstanding dues?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA): (a) The number of telephone connections temporarily disconnected for non-payment of their outstanding dues in the country during the last three years, year-wise is given below:

Year	No. of Telephone connections disconnected
1982-83 . .	Not available (The period of preservation of record is on y two years. Hence the information for 1982-83 is not avalilable).
1983-84 . .	5,77,833
1984-85 . .	6,24,957

(b) The amount of Telephone dues outstanding for the last three years, year-wise is furnished as under:

Rs in crores

year	Amount (as on 31st March each year)
1982—83	46.84
1983—84	52.45
1984—85	63.87

(c) The steps which are generally taken for recovery of dues are indicated below:

(i) The telephone connections of the defaulting subscribers are disconnected temporarily to persuade them to settle the outstanding dues. If there are any other telephones/telex provided for the defaulter anywhere else in the country, they are also disconnected;

(ii) the defaulters are contacted personally by the telephone revenue Inspectors to request them to pay the dues, even in instalments where justified. Legal notices asking the subscriber to pay the dues are issued;